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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex

2. Type of Proposed Action:

The Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex (GFSSC) proposes to develop a 1000-yard, handicap-accessible shooting range for long-range rifle and Cowboy Action long-range rifle shooting at the GFSSC by constructing firing platforms at 200, 400, 600, and 1000 yards with a parking lot behind each firing line. In addition, the GFSSC proposes to construct a road connecting all the firing lines to the target pit. The target pit with 15 target backers have already been installed at a cost of \$80,000.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex is located approximately 5 miles north of Great Falls, Montana, 1 mile east of Highway 87, at 171 Morony Dam Road, Great Falls, MT, 59405, Lat. 47.5730378, Long. 111.223764, Section 16, Township 21 North Range 4 East.



Figure 1 – Aerial View of Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex, Great Falls, Montana

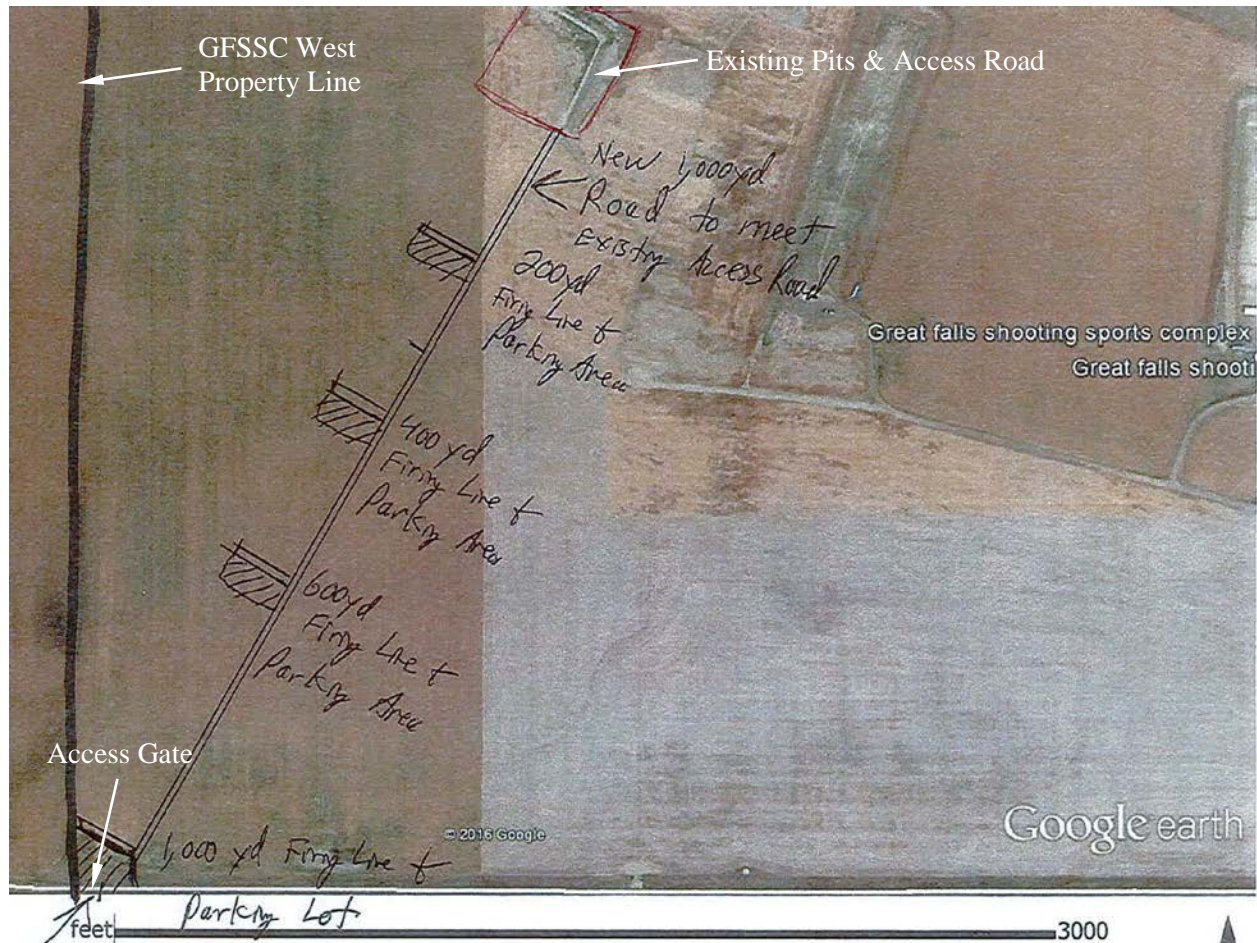


Figure 2. Concept Plan for the Great Falls Shooting Complex Long Range Rifle Range

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

(a)(i) *Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;*

(ii) *May not limit the number of members;*

(iii) *May charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*

(iv) *Shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*

(b) *Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

5. Need for the Action(s):

There are only three 1000-yard ranges in Montana and shooters must drive several hours to participate in long-distance matches. This range will allow local long-range shooters to host weekly and/or monthly matches and larger Statewide and National matches. This will provide the opportunity for a larger number of long-distance matches in Montana and will allow our local shooters to practice at the distances at which they will be competing during State and National matches.

This range will also allow the Cowboy Action Shooters to offer up to 1000-yard long-range matches at the SASS Montana State Championship. This opportunity is rare in Cowboy Action Shooting and will, therefore, help to bring more shooters to the SASS Montana State Championship. This will, in turn, benefit Great Falls and our surrounding communities through added hotel, restaurant and tourism spending.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The objective of the proposed project is to develop a 1000-yard shooting range for long-range rifle and Cowboy Action long-range rifle shooting, including building firing platforms at 200, 400, 600, and 1000 yards with parking lots behind each firing line.

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

The proposed project would involve approximately 15 acres of the long-range rifle range.

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The GFSSC is located on 960 acres of both privately owned and leased public land. The GFSSC entered into a 50-year lease agreement with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in 2003 to lease 600 acres of state-owned land. In addition, the GFSSC purchased 360 acres in fee title in 2004. The property is not located within a floodplain and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The range offers shooting opportunities for rifle, pistol, shotgun, archery, cowboy action, long-range rifle, and black powder shooting.

9. Description of Project:

The proposed project consists of the development of a long-range rifle range by constructing firing platforms at 200, 400, 600, and 1000 yards with parking lots at each platform and a road connecting the parking lots.

▪ Dirt Work	\$ 20,000
▪ Gravel Work	\$ 55,000
▪ Parking Areas	\$ 13,500
▪ 4 Shooting Platforms	<u>\$ 2,000</u>
Total Project Budget	\$110,500
Total Funding Requested from FWP	\$ 55,250

10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

None

Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$55,250

11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:

The GFSSC is located on 960 acres of both private land deeded to the GFSSC and state-owned land leased from Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). This is a private range with an annual membership fee ranging from \$45 to \$60, though the range is open free to the public on select days and for a day use fee on other days. The Skeet Club is open free to the public any day the skeet range is open. The GFSSC hosts approximately 150 events each year and approximately 18 organizations use the range each year, including: Missouri River Shooters Association, Missouri River Women Shooters, Ed McGivern Pistol Club, Sun River Skeet Club, Rattlesnake Butte Archers, Black Horse Shootists, Great Falls Police Department, Montana Highway Patrol, Boy Scouts, Weapons Collectors Society of Montana, 4-H, The Well-Armed Woman Chapter, Malmstrom Air Force Base; Cascade County Sheriff's Department; US Border Patrol, Department of Homeland Security; US Forest Service; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and Department of Interior.

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:

Because the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex is a non-profit, private shooting club for members, there has been no public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range development proposals have been discussed with the club members and the associated project vendors and contractors.

13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Judy Farris, 3609 9th Ave. N, Great Falls, MT 59401. (406) 727-7625.

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The GFSSC is a non-profit, private shooting club. The closest shooting range providing similar shooting opportunities is in Missoula, Montana, 167 miles from the GFSSC.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 22, 2016.

PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A, the **Proposed Alternative**, and **Alternative B**, the **No Action Alternative**, were considered.

- **Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project): to develop a 1000-yard, handicap-accessible shooting range for long-range rifle and Cowboy Action long-range rifle shooting at the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex (GFSSC). There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The no action alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The range will continue on with present conditions. Land use would remain the same.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the

proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

None. Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that were deemed reasonably available, or prudent. Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations): None

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		#2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		#4
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		#5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		#7
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		#8
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		#9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		#11

2. & 5. There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may

temporarily leave the area during construction.

4. The elimination of vegetation for the implementation of the proposed project will not change the overall abundance and diversity of plant species within the area. The proposed project occupies a small portion of the property. Due to prior land use, native vegetation has been disturbed in the area of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project will have a minor impact on native vegetation in the area.

7. The proposed project will cause limited displacement of soils but the developments will not substantially effect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized. Erosion control measures will be in effect and disturbed area will be reseeded.

8. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by construction equipment during construction. However, the construction time is short and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population near the property.

9. This project uses no federal funds nor does it take place on state owned or controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations and the State Antiques Act do not apply.

11. The property is already used as a shooting range so the proposed project will have no additional impact on the aesthetics of the property.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		#4
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		#7

8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

4. The site is adjacent to surrounding agricultural land used for grazing and hay production.

7. The proposed developments will increase shooting opportunities within the community.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the projects reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative.

The Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex's Proposed Alternative, to provide a safe, regulated shooting opportunity, is supported by its members and the public. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the Proposed Alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

- Judy Farris, 3609 9th Ave. N, Great Falls, MT 59401. (406) 727-7625.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

Andrea Darling, Darling Natural Resource Consulting, Montana City, MT 59634

Date Completed:

April 25, 2016

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Great Falls Tribune, Great Falls, MT* announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.